

# WDBS--growth reflects more interest

By Steve Hoffius

Features staff

North Carolina radio stations generally produce little besides commercials and automobile fatality statistics, interrupted by an occasional verse of "Mah baby's left me ah'm feelin so bad, woh woh." In the midst of that, WDBS can be an oasis.

The station is totally student

As student tastes vary, so does the selection of music to be played. The staff keeps track of what's popular, says Maher, by talking with other students, checking sales at the dope shop and record stores, "and literally listening under windows on Friday and Saturday nights."

One thing which though the years has remained fairly

supplemented by Cahn and Lynch, who cover most local occurrences.

News facilities expanded

The news facilities next year will be expanded, making WDBS physically the largest broadcast news department in the state. Because of this addition, "town news will be transmitted faster," says Maher. "We will have more documentaries this year and will be able to serve better the ethnic communities. We hope to get in touch with Malcolm X Liberation University and black Durham leaders to see how we can best work with them."

WDBS hopes to add new and unique entertainment forms, such as the production of live radio dramas. In the past, the station has broadcast serials of "The Shadow" for 13 weeks, and it reportedly was very popular with the campus.

The most immediate addition to the programming will take place on May 5. On that date, University President Terry Sanford will receive phoned-in questions from the audience as the start of what could become a regular part of the WDBS news presentation.

May go FM

There is also a "50-50 chance" that WDBS will be broadcast on the FM channel, as well as 1600 AM as it now is. "We are negotiating now with a radio station in town," says Maher, "and the main problem

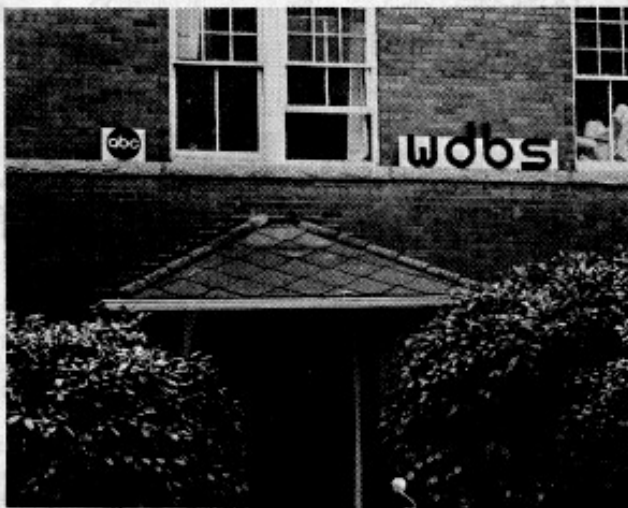


Photo by Barry Bohrer

Hidden away on East Campus is Bivens Building—the home of WDBS. seems to be financing. We hope to have FM the first of next year, covering the entire triangle area."

The broadcast, at least in its first years, would be the same as that on AM for the campus.

To pay for all of these innovations, the station looks in part to the University for funds, but primarily to its advertising resources. In "good" years, the station has a budget of around \$8,000, only \$1,600 of which

comes from the school.

The staff of 75 people work out of the station's Bivens Building studio on the outskirts of East Campus. Though they have announcers for at least 14 hours a day, they concentrate their efforts on the 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. time slot, which is the most popular. Maher estimates that at that time, "perhaps 70% of the campus is listening."

Each broadcast includes an announcer, engineer, and newsmen. The announcer introduces the records and chooses them, following a pattern devised by program director Warren Pittman. This pattern lists the frequency each category of record (oldie, soul, top 40, etc.) will be played. The engineer handles the mechanics of the broadcast and fits in the three to four commercials each hour. The newsmen reads the three to five minutes of news each hour.

No experience needed

The majority of the staff had no experience before coming to WDBS, though a few have spent time with local or (in the case of news director Lynch) national stations. "Anybody can be an announcer," claims program manager Warren Pittman. "He just has to be able to talk." However, new recruits to the station must go through a training period to develop their "radio voice" and to learn all the machines with which they have to work. "Still, we try to get people on the air as soon as possible," says Pittman.

From this staff of students are elected the officials of the station, including this year's station manager, Maher; program manager, Pittman; news director, Lynch; business manager, Tom Fine; sales manager, Doug Lovett; traffic manager, Winnifred Barritt; and chief engineer, Jim Davis.

This staff, and especially these officials, are the ones responsible for making WDBS more than just a group of students having fun. They have helped build a small campus station into a position so strong that it challenges any outside station for student listenership.

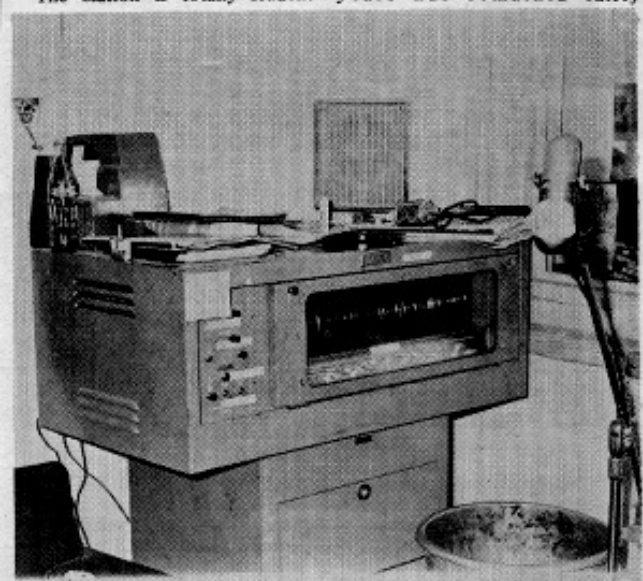


Photo by Barry Bohrer

"Otto," the all night "D.J.," is part of WDBS's growing automation.

controlled and has a listenership restricted to the Duke campus, so it reflects the interests and desires of the students. "Three years ago, Duke students liked mostly soul—now they're into music more," says station manager Jim Maher.

consistent, though, is the lack of commercials and the emphasis on Duke, especially news coverage. The news staff consists of ten announcers, field reporter Aaron Cahn and news director Scott Lynch. National news from ABC and UPI wire services is



Photo by Barry Bohrer

WDBS disc jockey Dave Schraub works to provide music wanted by Duke students.